

# NEWS RELEASE



*Office of the United States Attorney  
Western District of Louisiana*

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**For Immediate Release  
October 27, 2005**

## **TWO PRISON INMATES INDICTED ON FEMA FRAUD CHARGES**

Shreveport, Louisiana . . . Two female inmates housed at the Avoyelles Women's Correctional Facility in Cottonport, Louisiana, have each been indicted by a federal grand jury for claiming to be hurricane victims in order to fraudulently obtain FEMA relief funds, United States Attorney Donald W. Washington announced.

Two separate indictments were returned charging AMBER LYNN WILLIAMS, age 24, and SHERRI LEE DAVIS, age 47, each charged with one count of theft of public money and one count of mail fraud.

WILLIAMS applied for FEMA disaster relief funds from prison falsely claiming that her primary residence in New Orleans, Louisiana had been damaged. Based on the registration, FEMA mailed WILLIAMS a check in the amount of \$2,000 for housing assistance.

SHERRI LEE DAVIS similarly applied for FEMA disaster relief funds claiming that her

primary residence, which she rents in New Orleans, Louisiana, had been damaged. Based on the registration, FEMA mailed DAVIS a \$2,000 check for housing assistance and a \$2,358 check as a rental assistance benefit.

WILLIAMS and DAVIS both requested that their checks be mailed to them at the Avoyelles Women's Correctional Facility, rather than having FEMA deposit them into their bank account. When the checks arrived at the facility, officials there intercepted the checks.

WILLIAMS and DAVIS are scheduled to make their initial appearances before United States Magistrate Judge James Kirk in U.S. District Court on November 21, 2005.

If convicted, both defendants face a maximum of 10 years in prison on the charge of theft, 20 years on the charge of mail fraud, and a \$250,000 fine.

An indictment is merely an accusation and a defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. Defendants are entitled to a presumption of innocence under the law, and the government has the burden of proving every element of the charges beyond a reasonable doubt.

Sentencing in federal court is determined by the discretion of federal judges and the governing statute. United States Sentencing Guidelines established by the United States Congress and the United States Sentencing Commission are only used as guidelines by the judge in determining the appropriate sentence. Parole has been abolished in the federal system.

In September 2005, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, designed to deter, investigate and prosecute disaster-related federal crimes such as charity fraud, identity theft, procurement fraud and insurance fraud. The Hurricane Katrina Fraud

Task Force - chaired by Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division - includes members from the FBI, the Federal Trade Commission, the Postal Inspector's Office and the Executive Office of United States Attorneys, among others.

If anyone has information concerning possible fraud being committed during the post-Katrina recovery effort, please call either the DHS-OIG Fraud Hotline at 1-866-720-5721 or the FBI Fraud Hotline at 1-800-225-5324.

These arrests were the result of a joint investigation by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Postal Inspector, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. These cases are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Alexander Van Hook.

For further information, please contact United States Attorney Donald W. Washington at 337-262-6618 or First Assistant U.S. Attorney Bill Flanagan at 318-676-3600.

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